THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) During the period from November, 1997 to March, 1998, the prices of crude oil and petroleum products in the international market declined. However, the declining trend changed towards end March 1998 and oil prices rose in April, 1998.

(b) The required information is given in Annexure. [See Appendix 184 Annexure No. 28].

(c) Prices of oil in the international market are highly volatile and are subject to wide fluctuations and any movement in the international prices is bound to have an impact on our import cost. It is, therefore, difficult to predict the savings expected in future imports.

Price Hike of LPG and Allied Products

992. SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to hike prices of LPG and allied products to the tune of 33 per cent; and

(b) if so, the need and justification thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The Government had decided in November, 1997 that subsidy on LPG will be reduced in phases to reach the level of 15% of the import parity price by 2000-01. The subsidy will be transferred to the fiscal budget from the year 2002 onwards.

Complaints against Dealer and Officials of IOC and HPC in West Bengal

993. SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the complaints against the dealers/oil company officials of Indian Oil Corporation and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation by the LPG consumers in West Bengal as ventilated in local newspaper Ananda Bazar Patrika dated 19th November, 1997 and 5th December, 1997;

(b) whether the grievance redressal system has become totally non-functional forcing consumers to approach newspapers with their complaints;

(c) if not, the action taken so far by the Companies against the errant dealers and the officials based on the above complaints; and

(d) the action taken by the Oil Companies to strengthen their grievance redressal system?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (d) Yes Sir, IOCL and HPCL are aware of the complaints published in the Local Newspapers by LPG consumers including Ananda Bazar Patrika dated 19.11.97 and 5.12.97. Inspections are carried out by the officers of Customer Service Cells of IOCL and HPCL. Appropriate penal action is taken against the erring distributors under the Marketing Discipline Guidelines, which includes warning letters, fines and suspension and termination. Necessary action has been taken on all complaints received from consumers in West Bengal. Recently the Marketing Discipline Guidelines have been revised in May, 1998 and made very

stringent, providing for severe penalities against errant dealers and negligent officials.

Regulation of Prices of Petro-Products by Refineries

994. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that oil refineries have been given free hand to regulate prices of their petro-products;

(b) whether this would not result in competition by different refineries with regard to their products; and

(c) how far this would be beneficial to the consumers at large?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) Effective 1.4.98, the prices of the controlled products namely MS, HSD, SKO (PDS), LPG (Domestic) NGL and ATF are beign fixed by the Government. The pricing of all other petroleum products like Naphatha, FO, LSHS, Bitumen, Paraffin Wax etc. sold by the oil companies has been decontrolled.

(b) and (c) One of the objectives of the phased deregulation that has been undertaken is to ensure that consumers benefit as a result of the competition.

Availability of Natural Gas in Andaman Islands

995. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the survey conducted in Andaman Islands has revealed that a stock of 1700,000 million cubic ft. natural gas is available in these islands; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government towards utilisation of this natural gas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) Seismic surveys conducted in deep waters by Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH) in the Andaman Sea area has indicated presence of gas hydrates and natural gas below it, in certain parts, based on special processing of data. This has to be confirmed by drilling of wells only after that quantity of gas can be estimated.

(b) Does not arise in view of (a) above at this stage.

Performance of Oil Refineries

996. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have assessed the performance of public/private sector oil refineries for 1997-98 in terms of the targets set by standard parameters;

(b) if so, the details thereof, refinery-wise and how does it compare with the corresponding earlier two years period;

(c) the reasons for failure to achieve the targets/low capacity utilisation etc;

(d) the details of progress achieved on private/public sector ongoing projects and extent of time and cost overruns witnessed during implementation, projects-wise alongwith reasons therefor; and

(e) the details of projects cleared during 1997-98 and major investment proposals awaiting clearance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The details of capacity utilisation, a standard important parameter of Public Sector/ Joint Venture Refineries during 1997-98, as compared to earlier two years *i.e.* 1996-97 and 1995-96 may be seen at *Annexure-I.* [*See* Appendix 184 Annexure No. 29]